

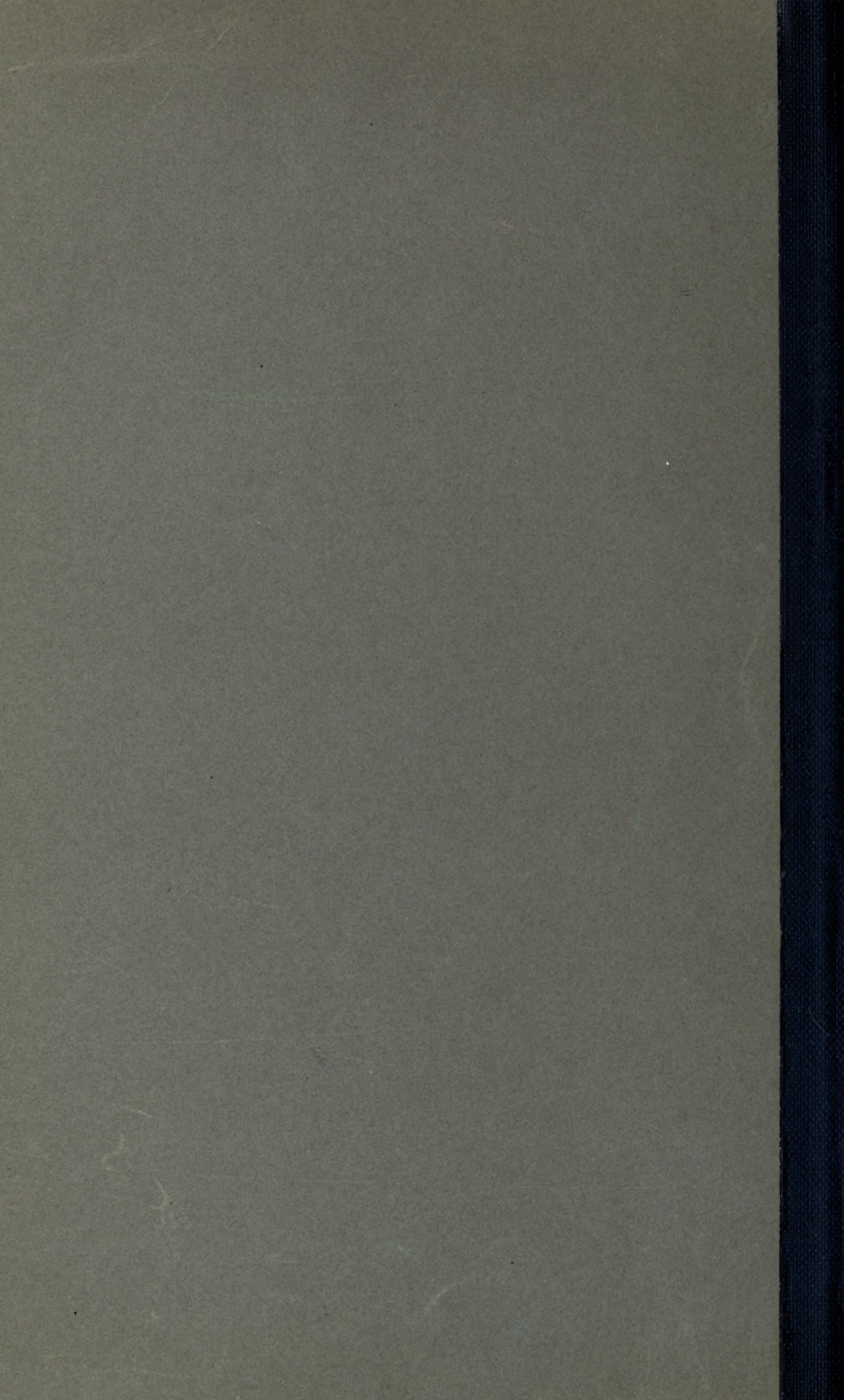
Paracelsius
Confessions of a provincial editor

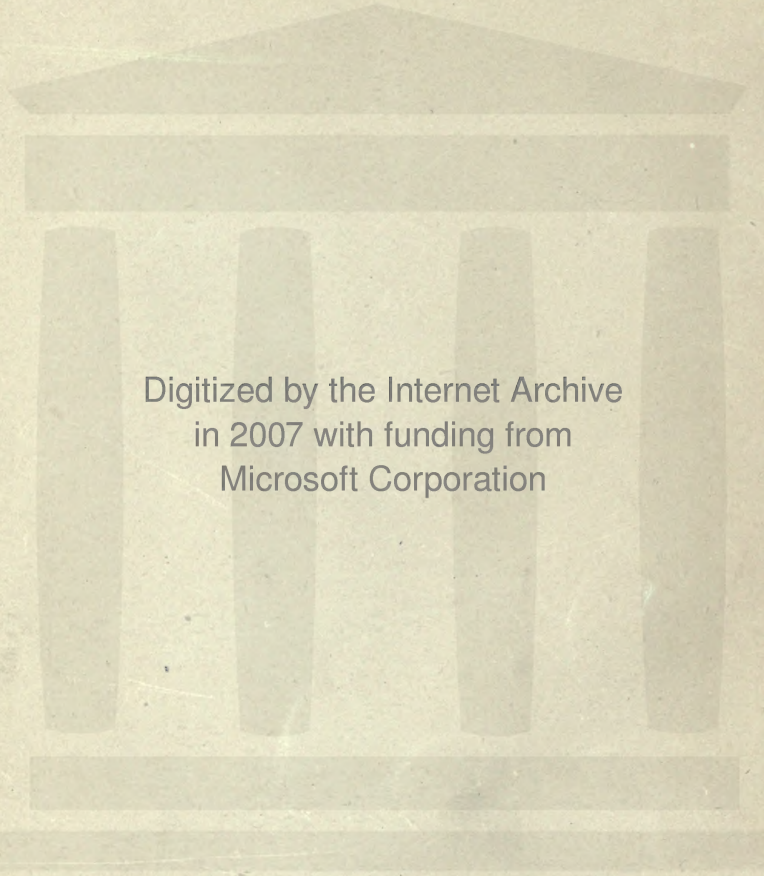
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CONFESSIONS OF A
PROVINCIAL EDITOR



by

Paracelsus

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[Excerpt from the Atlantic;
March, 1902]

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[Paracekus (pseud.)]

CONFESSIONS OF A PROVINCIAL EDITOR.

THERE is something at once deliciously humorous and pathetic, to the editor of a small daily in the provinces, about that old-fashioned phrase, "the liberty of the press." It is another one of those matters lying so near the margeland of what is mirthful and what is sad that a tilt of the mood may slip it into either. To the general, doubtless, it is a truth so obvious that it is never questioned, a bequest from our forefathers that has paid no inheritance tax to time. In all the host of things insidiously un-American which have crept into our life, thank Heaven! say these unconscious Pharisees, the "press," if somewhat freakish, has remained free. So it is served up as a toast at banquets, garnished with florid rhetoric; it is still heard from old-fashioned pulpits; it cannot die even though the conditions which made the phrase possible have passed away.

The pooh-poohing of the elders, the scoffing of the experienced, has little effect upon a boy's mind when it tries to do away with so palpable a truth as that concerning the inability of a chopped-up snake to die until sunset, or that matter-of-fact verity that devil's darning needles have little aim in life save to sew up the ears of youths and maidens. So with that glib old fantasy "America's free and untrammelled press:" it needs a vast deal of argument to convince an older public that, as a matter to be accepted without a question, it has no right to exist. The conditioning clause was tacked on some years ago, doubtless when the old-time weekly began to expand into the modern small daily. The weekly was a periodic pamphlet; the daily disdained its inheritance, and subordinated the expression of opinion to the printing of those matters from which opinion is made. The cost of equipment of a

daily newspaper compared to the old-fashioned weekly, as a general thing, makes necessary for the launching of such a venture a well-organized stock company, and in this lies much of the trouble.

Confessions imply previous wrongdoing. Mine, while they are personal enough, are really more interesting because of the vast number of others they incriminate. If two editors from lesser cities do not laugh in each other's faces, after the example of Cicero's augurs, it is because they are more modern, and choose to laugh behind each other's backs. So, in turning state's evidence, I feel less a coward than a reformer.

What circumstance has led me to believe concerning the newspaper situation in a hundred and one small cities of this country is so startling in its unexplained brevity, I scarce dare parade it forth as a prelude to my confessions. So much of my experience is predicated upon it that I do not dare save it for a peroration. Here it is, then, somewhat more than half-truth, somewhat less than the truth itself: "a newspaper in a small city is not a legitimate business enterprise." That seems bold and bare enough to stamp me as sensational, does it not? Hear, then, the story of my Herald, knowing that it is the story of other Heralds. The Herald's story is mine, and my story, I dare say, is that of many others. To the facts, then. I speak with authority, being one of the scribes.

I chose newspaper work in my native city, Pittsburg, mainly because I liked to write. I went into it after my high-school days, spent a six months' apprenticeship on a well-known paper, left it for another, and in five years' hard work had risen from the reportorial ranks to that of a subordinate editorial writer, — a dubious rise. Hard

work had not threshed out ambition: the few grains left sprouted. The death of an uncle and an unexpected legacy fructified my desire. I became zealous to preach crusades; to stamp my own individuality, my own ideals, upon the "people;" in short, to own and run a newspaper. It was a buxom fancy, a day-dream of many another like myself. A rapid rise had obtained for me the summit of reasonable expectation in the matter of salary; but I then thought, as indeed I do still, that the sum in one's envelope o' Mondays is no criterion of success. Personal ambition to "mould opinion," as the quaint untruth has it, as well as the commercial side of owning a newspaper, made me look about over a wide field, seeking for a city which really needed a new newspaper. The work was to be in a chosen field, and to be one's own taskmaster is worth more than salary. As I prospected, I saw no possible end to the venture save that of every expectation fulfilled.

I found a goodly town (of course I cannot name it) that was neither all future nor all past; a growing place, believed in by capitalists and real estate men. It was well railroaded, in the coal fields, near to waterways and to glory. It was developing itself and being developed by outside capital. It had a newspaper, a well-established affair, whose old equipment I laughed at. It needed a new one. My opening was found. The city would grow; I would grow up with it. The promise of six years ago has been in part fulfilled. I have no reason to regret my choosing the city I did.

I went back to Pittsburg, consulted various of the great, obtained letters to prominent men high in the political faith I intended to follow, went back to my town armed with the letters, and talked it over. They had been considering the matter of a daily paper there to represent their faith and themselves, and after much dickering a company was

formed. I found I could buy the weekly Herald, a nice property whose "good will" was worth having. Its owner was not overanxious to sell, so drove a good bargain. As a weekly the paper for forty-three years had been gospel to many; I would make it daily gospel to more. In giving \$5500 for it I knew I was paying well, but it had a great name and a wide circulation.

I saw no necessity of beginning on a small scale. People are not dazzled in this way. I wanted a press that folk would come in and see run, and as my rival had no linotypes, that was all the more reason why I should have two. Expensive equipments are necessary for newspapers when they intend to do great works and the public is eager to see what is going to happen. All this took money, more money than I had thought it would. But talking the matter over with my new friends and future associates, I convinced them that any economy was false economy at the start. But when I started I found that I owned but forty per cent of the Herald Publishing Company's stock. I was too big with the future to care. The sixty per cent was represented by various politicians. That was six years ago.

It does not do in America, much less in the Atlantic, to be morosely pessimistic. At most one can be regretful. And yet why should I be regretful? You have seen me settle in my thriving city; see me now. I have my own home, a place of honor in the community, the company of the great. You see me married, with enough to live on, enough to entertain with, enough to afford a bit of travel now and then. I still "run" the Herald: it pays me my own salary (my stockholders have never interfered with the business management of the paper), and were I insistent I might have a consular position of importance, should the particular set of politicians I uphold (my "gang," as my rival the Bulletin says) revert to power.

There is food in my larder, there are flowers in my garden. I carry enough insurance to enable my small family to do without me and laugh at starvation. I am but thirty-four years old. In short, I have a competence in a goodly little city. Why should I not rejoice with Stevenson that I have "some rags of honor left," and go about in middle age with my head high? Who of my schoolmates has done better?

Is it nothing, then, to see hope dwindle and die away? My regret is not pecuniary: it is old-fashionedly moral. Where are those high ideals with which I set about this business? I dare not look them in their waxen faces. I have acquired immunity from starvation by selling underhandedly what I had no right to sell. Some may laugh; the better American. But P. T. Barnum's dictum about the innate love Americans have for a hoax is really a serious matter, when the truth is told. Mr. Barnum did not leave a name and a fortune because he befooled the public. If now and then he gave them Cardiff giants and white elephants, he also gave them a brave display in three crowded rings. I have dealt almost exclusively with the Cardiff giants.

My regret is, then, a moral one. I bought something the nature of which did not dawn upon me until late; I felt environment adapt me to it little by little. The process was gradual, but I have not the excuse that it was unconscious. There is the sting in the matter. I can scarcely plead ignorance.

Somewhere in a scrapbook, even now beginning to yellow, I have pasted, that it may not escape me (as if it could!), my first editorial announcing to the good world my intent with the Herald. Let me quote from the mocking, double-leaded thing. I know the words. I know even now the high hope which gave them birth. I know how enchanting the vista was unfolding into the future. I can see how stern my boyish face was, how warm my blood. With a

blare of trumpets I announced my mission. With a mustering day of the good old stock phrases used on such occasions I marshaled my metaphors. In making my bow, gravely and earnestly, I said, among other things: "Without fear or favor, serving only the public, the Herald will be at all times an intelligent medium of news and opinions for an intelligent community. Bowing the knee to no clique or faction, keeping in mind the great imperishable standards of American manhood, the noble traditions upon which the framework of our country is grounded, the Herald will champion, not the weak, not the strong, but the right. It will spare no expense in gathering news, and it will give all the news all of the time. It will so guide its course that only the higher interests of the city are served, and will be absolutely fearless. Independent in politics, it will freely criticise when occasion demands. By its adherence to these principles may it stand or fall."

But why quote more? You have all read them, though I doubt if you have read one more sincere. I felt myself a force, the Herald the expression of a force; an entity, the servant of other forces. My paper was to be all that other papers were not. My imagination carried me to sublime heights. This was six years ago.

Events put a check on my runaway ambition in forty-eight hours. The head of the biggest clothing house, and the largest advertiser in the city, called on me. I received him magnificently in my new office, motioning him to take a chair. I can see him yet,—stout, prosperous, and to the point. As he talked, he toyed with a great seal that hung from a huge hawser-like watch-chain.

"Say," said he, refusing my chair, "just keep out a little item you may get hold of to-day." His manner was the same with me as with a salesman in his "gent's" underclothing department.

"Concerning?" I asked pleasantly.

"Oh, there's a friend of mine got arrested to-day. Some farmer had him took in for fraud or something. He'll make good, I guess; I know, in fact. He ain't a bad fellow, and it would hurt him if this got printed."

I asked him for particulars; saw a reporter who had the story; learned the man was a sharp-dealer with a bad reputation, who had been detected in an attempt to cheat a poor farmer out of \$260,—a bare-faced fraud indeed. I learned that the man had long been suspected by public opinion of semi-legal attempts to rob the "widow and the orphan," and that at last there was a chance of "showing him up." I went back with a bold face.

"I find, though the case has not been tried, that the man is undoubtedly guilty."

"Guilty?" said my advertiser. "What of that? He'll settle."

"That hardly lessens the guilt." I smiled.

The clothing man looked astounded. "But if you print that he'll be ruined," he sputtered.

"From all I can learn, so much the better," I answered.

Then my man swore. "See here," he said, when he got back to written language. "He's just making his living; you ain't got no right to stop a man's earning his living. It ain't none of any newspaper's business. Just a private affair between him and the farmer, and he'll settle."

"I don't see how," I put in somewhat warmly, "it is n't the business of a newspaper to tell its public of a dangerous man, arrested for fraud, caught in his own net so badly that he is willing to settle, as you claim. It is my obvious duty to my constituents to print such a case. From the news point of view" — I was going on smoothly, but he stepped up and shook his fist in my face.

"Constituents? Ain't I a constit-

uent? Don't I pay your newspaper for more advertising than any one else? Ain't I your biggest constituent? Say, young man, you're too big for this town. Don't try to bully me!" he suddenly screamed. "Don't you dare bully me! Don't you dare try it. I see what you want. You're trying to blackmail me, you are; you're trying to work me for more advertising; you want money out of me. That game don't go; not with me it don't. I'll have you arrested."

And he talked as though he believed it!

Then he said he'd never pay me another cent, might all manner of things happen to his soul if he did. He'd go to the Bulletin, and double his space. The man was his friend, and he had asked but a reasonable request, and I had tried to blackmail him. He worked that blackmail in every other sentence. Then he strode out, slamming the door.

The "little item" was not printed in the Herald (nor in the Bulletin, more used to such requests), and, as he had said, he was my biggest advertiser. It was my first experience with the advertiser with a request: for this reason I have given the incident fully. It recurred every week. I grew to think little of it soon. "Think of how his children will feel," say the friends of some one temporarily lodged in the police station. "Think of what the children of some one this man will swindle next will say," is what I might answer. But I don't,—not if an advertiser requests otherwise. As I have grown to phrase the matter, a newspaper is a contrivance which meets its pay roll by selling space to advertisers: render it therefore agreeable to those who make its existence possible. Less jesuitically it may be put — the ultimate editor of a small newspaper is the advertiser, the biggest advertiser is the politician. This is a maxim experience has ground with its heel into the fabric of my soul.

We all remember Emerson's brilliantly un-New-England advice, "Hitch

your wagon to a star." This saying is of no value to newspapers, for they find stars poor motive power. Theoretically, it must be granted that newspapers, of all business ventures, should properly be hitched to a star. Yet I have found that if any hitching is to be done it must be to the successful politician. Amending Mr. Emerson, I have found it the best rule to "yoke your newspaper to the politician in power."

This, then, is what a small newspaper does: sells its space to the advertiser, its policy to the politician. It is smooth sailing save when these two forces conflict, and then Scylla and Charybdis were joys to the heart. Let us look into the advertiser part of the business a bit more closely.

The advertiser seeks the large circulation. The biggest advertiser seeks the cheapest people. Thus is a small newspaper (the shoe will pinch the feet of the great as well) forced, in order to survive, to pander to the Most Low. The man of culture does not buy \$4.99 overcoats, the woman of culture 27 cent slippers. The newspaper must see that it reaches those who do. This is one of the saddest matters in the whole business. The Herald started with a circulation slightly over 2000. I found that my town was near enough to two big cities for the papers published there to enter my field. I could not hope to rival their telegraphic features, and I soon saw that if the Herald was to succeed it must pay strict attention to local news. My rival stole its telegraphic news bodily; I paid for a service. The people seemed to care little for attempted assassinations of the Shah, but they were intensely interested in pinochle parties in the seventh ward. I gave them pinochle parties. Still my circulation diminished. My rival regained all that I had taken from him at the start. I wondered why, and compared the papers. I "set" more matter than he. The great difference was that my headlines were smaller and my

editorial page larger than his. Besides, his tone was much lower: he printed rumor, made news to deny it, — did a thousand and one things that kept his paper "breezy."

I put in bigger headlines, — outdid him, in fact. I almost abolished my editorial page, making of it an attempt to amuse, not to instruct. I printed every little personality, every rumor my staff could catch hold of in their tours. The result came slowly, but surely. Success came when I exaggerated every little petty scandal, every row in a church choir, every hint of a disturbance. I compromised four libel suits, and ran my circulation up to 3200 in eleven months.

Then I formed some more conclusions. I evolved a newspaper law out of the matter and the experience of some brothers in the craft in small cities near by. Briefly, I stated it in this wise: The worse a paper is, the more influence it has. To gain influence, be wholly bad.

This is no paradox, nor does it reflect particularly upon the public. There is reason for it in plenty. Take the ably edited paper, which glories in its editorial page, in the clean exposition of an honest policy, in high ideas put in good English, and you will find a paper which has a small clientele in a provincial town, or if it has readers it will have small influence. Say that it strikes the reader at breakfast, and the person who has leisure to breakfast is the person who has time for editorials, and the expression of that paper's opinion is carefully read. Should these opinions square with the preconceived ideas of the reader, the editorials are "great;" if not, they are "rotten." In other words, the man who reads carefully written editorials is the man whose opinion is formed, — the man of culture, and therefore of prejudice. Doubtless he is as well acquainted with conditions as the writer; perhaps better acquainted. When a man does have

opinions in a small city, he is quite likely to have strong ones. A flitting editorial is not the thing to change them. On the other hand, the man who has little time to read editorials, or perhaps little inclination, is just the man who might be influenced by them if read. Hence well-written editorials on a small daily are wasted thunder in great part, an uneconomic expenditure of force.

When local politics are at a fever-heat, a different aspect of affairs is often seen: editorials are generally read, not so much as expressions of opinion, but as party attack and defense. During periods of political quiet the aim of most editorial pages is to amuse or divert. The advertiser has noted the decadence of the editorial page, and as a general thing makes a violent protest if the crying of his wares is made to emanate from this poor, despised portion of the paper. An advertisement on a local page is worth much more, and he pays more for the privilege.

So I learned another lesson. I shifted, as my successful contemporaries have done, my centre of editorial gravity from its former high position to my first and local pages. I now editorialize by suggestion. News now carries its own moral, the bias I wish it to show. This requires no less skill than the writing of editorials, and, greatly as I deplore it, I find the results pleasing. Does the Herald wish to denounce a public official? Into a dozen articles is the venom inserted. Slyly, subtly, and oftentimes openly do news articles point the obvious moral. The "Acqua Tofana" of journalism is ready to be used when occasion demands, and this is very often. Innuendo is common, the stiletto is inserted quietly and without warning, and tactics a man would shun may be used by a newspaper with little or no adverse comment. I mastered the philosophy of the indirect. I gained my ends by carefully coloring my news to the ends and policies of the

paper. Nor am I altogether to blame. My paper was supposed to have influence. When I wrote careful and patient editorials, it had none. I saw the public mind must be enfiladed, ambushed, and I adopted those primary American tactics of Indian warfare: shot from behind tree trunks, spared not the slain, and from the covert of a news item sent out screeching savages upon the unsuspecting public. Editorial warfare as conducted fifty years ago is obsolete; its methods are as antiquated to-day as is the artillery of that age.

I have called the Herald my own at different times in this article. I conceived it, established it, built it up. It stands to-day as the result of my work. True, my money was not the only capital it required, but mine was the hand that reared it. I found, to my great chagrin, that few people in the city considered me other than a hired servant of the political organization that aided in establishing the Herald. It was an "organ," a something which stood to the world as the official utterance of this political set. "Organs," in newspaper parlance, properly have but one function. Mine was evidently to explain or attack, as the case might be. To the politicians who helped start the Herald the paper was a political asset. It could on occasion be a club or a lever, as the situation demanded. I had been led to expect no personal intrusion. "Just keep straight with the party" was all that was asked. But never was constancy so unfaltering as that expected of the Herald. It must not print this because it was true; it must print that because it was untrue.

I had been six months in the city, when I overheard a conversation in a street car. "Oh, I'll fix the Herald all right. I know Johnny X," said one man. That was nice of Johnny X's friend, I thought. The Bulletin accused me of not daring to print certain matters. I was ashamed, humiliated. Between the friends of Johnny X and the

friends of others, I saw myself in my true light. Johnny X, by the way, a noisy ward politician, owned just one share in the Herald; but that gave his friends the right to ask him to "fix" it, nevertheless. I consulted with a wise man, a real leader, a man of experience and a warm heart. He heard me and laughed, patting me on the shoulder to humor me. "You want that printing, don't you?" he asked.

I admitted I did. I had counted on it.

"Then," said my adviser, "I would n't offend Johnny X, if I were you. He controls the supervisor in his ward."

I began to see a great light, and I have needed no other illumination since. This matter of public printing had been promised me. I knew it was necessary. I saw that, inasmuch as it was given out by the lowest politicians in the town, I escaped easily if I paid as my price the indulgence of the various Johnnies X who had "influence." I was the paid supernumerary of the party, yet had to bear its mistakes and follies, its weak men and their weaker friends, upon my poor editorial back. I realized it from that moment; I should have seen it before. But for all that, my cheeks burned for days, and my teeth set whenever I faced the thought. I don't mind it in the least now.

So at the end of a year and a half I saw a few more things. I saw that by being a good boy and adaptable to "fixing" I could earn thirty-five dollars a week with less work than I could earn forty-five dollars in a big city. I saw that the Herald as a business proposition was a failure; that is, it was not, even under the most advantageous conditions, the money-maker that I at first thought it to be. I saw that if the city grew, and if there were no more rivals, if there were a hundred advantageous conditions, it might make several thousand dollars a year, besides paying me a bigger salary. I was very

much disheartened. Then there came a turn.

I saw the business part of the proposition very clearly. I must play in with my owners, the party; and in turn my owners would support me nearly as well when they were out of power as they could when ruling. Revenue came from the city, the county, the state, all at "legal" rates. I began to see why these "legal" rates were high, some five times higher than those of ordinary advertising for such a paper as the Herald. The state, when paying its advertising bill, must pay the Herald five times the rate any clothing advertiser could get. The reason is not difficult to see. All over the state and country there are papers just like the Herald, controlled by little cliques of politicians, who, too miserly to support the necessary losses, make the people pay for them. Any attempt to lower the legal rate in any state legislature would call up innumerable champions of the "press," gentlemen all interested in their newspapers at home. The people pay more than a cent for their penny papers. It is the taxpayer who supports a thousand and one unnecessary "organs." The politicians are wise, after all.

So I got my perspective. I was paid to play the political game of others. I had to play it supported by indirect bribes. As a straight business proposition, — that is, without any state or city advertising, tax sales, printing of the proceedings, and the like, — the Herald could not live out a year. But by refusing to say many things, and by saying many more, I could get such share of these matters as would support the paper. In my second year, near its close, I saw that I was really a property, a chattel, a something bought and sold. I was being trafficked with to my loss. My friends bought me with public printing, and sold me for their own ends. I saw they had the best of the bargain.

I could do better without the middlemen. I determined to make my own bargain with the devil for my own soul. It was a brilliant thought, but a bitter one. I determined to be a Sir John Hawkwood, and sell my editorial mercenaries to the highest bidder. Only the weak are gregarious, I thought with Nietzsche. If I could not put a name upon my actions, at least I could put a price. I made a loan, grabbed up some Herald stock cheaply, and owned at last over fifty per cent of my own paper. Now, I thought, I will at least make money.

I knew at that particular time my own party joined with the enemy was very much interested in a contract the city was about to make with a lighting company, a long-term contract at an exorbitant price. No opposition was expected. The city council had been "seen," the reformers silenced. I knew some of the particulars. I knew that both parties were gaining at the expense of the public, to their own profit and the tremendous profit of the gas company. I, fearless in my new control, sent out a small editorial feeler, a little suggestion about municipal ownership. This time my editorial did have influence. No mango tree of an Indian juggler blossomed quicker. I was called upon one hour after the paper was out. What in the name of all unnamable did I mean? I laughed. I pointed out the new holdings of stock I had acquired. What did the gentlemen mean? They did n't know, — not then.

I had a very pleasant call from the gas company's attorney the next day. He was a most agreeable fellow, a man of parts, assuredly. I, a conscious chatel, would now appraise myself. I waited, letting the pleasantries flow by in a gentle stream. By the way, suggested my new friend, why did n't I try for the printing of the gas company? It was quite a matter. My friend was surprised that the Herald had so complete a job printing plant. The gas

company had all of its work done out of town, at a high rate, he thought. He would use his influence, etc., etc. Actually, I felt very important! All this to come out of a little editorial on municipal ownership! The Herald did n't care for printing so very much, I said. But I would think it over.

The next day I followed up my municipal ownership editorial. It was my answer. I waited for theirs. I waited in vain. I had overreached myself. This was humiliation indeed, and it aroused every bit of ire and revenge in me. I boldly launched out on a campaign against the dragon. I would see if the "press" could be held so cheaply. I printed statistics of the price of lighting in other cities. I exposed the whole scheme. I stood for the people at last! My early fire came back. We would see; the people and the Herald against a throttling corporation and a gang of corrupt aldermen.

Then the other side got into the war. I went to the bank to renew a note. I had renewed it a dozen times before. But the bank had seen the Gorgon and turned to stone. I dugged deep and met the note. A big law firm which had given me all its business began to seek out the Bulletin. One or two advertisers dropped out. Some unseen hand began to foment a strike. Were the banks, the bar, and, worst of all, the labor unions, in the pay of a gas company? It was exhilarating to be with "the people," but exhilaration does not meet pay rolls. I may state that I am now doing the gas company's printing at a very fair rate.

I saw the policy was a good one, nevertheless. I also saw that it could not be carried to the extreme. So I have become merely threatening. I have learned never to overstep my bounds. I take my lean years and my fat years, still a hireling, but having somewhat to say about my market value. What provincial paper does not have the same story to tell?

My public does n't care for good writing. It has no regard for reason. During one political campaign I tried reason. That is, I did n't denounce the adversary. Admitting he had some very good points, I showed why the other man had better ones. The general impression was that the Herald had "flopped," just because I did not abuse my party's opponent, but tried to defeat him with logic! A paper is always admired for its backbone, and backbone is its refusal to see two sides to a question.

I have reached the "masses." I tell people what they knew beforehand, and thus flatter them. Aiming to instruct them, I should offend. God is with the biggest circulations, and we must have them even if we appeal to class prejudice now and then.

I can occasionally foster a good work, almost underhandedly, it would seem. I take little pleasure in it. The various churches, hospitals, the library, all expect to be coddled indiscriminately and without returning any thanks whatever. I have railroad transportation as much as I wish, the magazines free of charge, and a seat in the theatre. These are my "perquisites." There is no particular future for me. The worst of it is that I don't seem to care. The gradual falling away from the high

estate of my first editorial is a matter for the student of character, which I am not. In myself, as in my paper, I only see results.

I think these confessions are ample enough and blunt enough. When I left the high school, I would have wished to word them in Stevensonian manner. That was some time ago. We who run small dailies have little care for the niceties of style. There are few of our clientele who know the nice from the not-nice. In our smaller cities we "suicide" and "jeopardize." We are visited by "agriculturalists," and "none of us are" exempt from little iniquities and unquities of style and expression. We go right on: "commence" where we should "begin," use "balance" for "remainder," never think of putting the article before "Hon." and "Rev.," and some of us abbreviate "assemblyman" into "ass," meaning nothing but condensation. Events still "transpire" in our small cities, and inevitably we "try experiments." We have learned to write "trousers," and "gents" appears only in our advertisements. In common with the very biggest and best papers we always say "leniency." That I do these things, the last coercion of environment, is the saddest, to me, of all.

Paracelsus.

SINGING WOOD.

UPON HEARING A GIRL PLAY THE VIOLIN.

IF with a kinsman's finger you could fret
 The vital chord in any clod or stone,
 Would there not bubble to the air a tone
 Of that one central music hidden yet?
 Would there not sound, in ears that still forget,
 Notes of the dumb, prenatal antiphone,
 Strains to unlock the sense from that long swoon
 Which holds us till we pay the bounden debt?

Atlantic

March 1902

So with this wood to-day you touched to song:
In it there slumbered all a season's sweet,
The moonlight and the morning and the wheat
And crocuses and catbirds, — one low, long
Sweep of the bow, and there a year you drew
As lies a landscape in a drop of dew.

Harrison S. Morris.

THE EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM IN THE PHILIPPINES.

THE problem of establishing a modified American school system in the Philippine Islands, under existing conditions, is also the problem of supplanting an old system deeply interwoven with the religious beliefs and social institutions of a semi-civilized people. The Spanish messengers of the faith who came to these islands implanted the faith and education at the same time. He who fails to take into account the early services of the members of the religious orders will not form an adequate judgment of present forces. Shrewd and capable leaders among them controlled these people for centuries, and built up an approach to civilized society by the introduction of a nominal change of faith and a plan of education which, although narrow, was not limited, as some think, in the number of persons who were somewhat educated. In pursuit of church policy, the education of the individual person did not go very far. Higher education was for the select class. When a Filipino felt an inclination to acquire an intellectual education, he could do so only by becoming a pupil in the ecclesiastical schools. The friars learned the dialects, and, in their capacity as local supervisors of schools, blocked every attempt of the government to make Spanish the basal language of school instruction. As in other Oriental countries, religious ideas absorbed so completely the attention that a lamentable backwardness is noted in the advancement

of public education. Impervious as it was to every liberalizing influence, the exclusively religious school system that the Americans found here was an anachronism, recalling European school systems of more than a hundred years ago. The instruction given, at its best, was weak on the side of thought work, and only fair in formal work. Nearly every organized town had its school, and in it the pupils were taught obedience, to read and write, more or less mechanically, the native dialect, and the catechism. A small fee was necessary for admission. In vitalizing power, in that which should elevate and uplift the race, the system was wholly lacking; and without this power any system must fail.

Confucianism never had a stronger hold on China and Japan than the church dogma had on the Philippines. Originality was a species of disloyalty. The mind of the Tagalo was restive in its ecclesiastical fetters. The insurrection of 1896 served to show the temper of the people toward church control, and explains the desire for modern education. The insurrection of 1896 was hardly over when the United States declared war against Spain. The overthrow of the Spanish rule and the occupation of the Philippines by the Americans have wrought a tremendous change in the condition, and advanced materially the affairs, of this far-off group of islands in the East.

There was a thirst for Western edu-

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